

**DRAFT**  
**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

**Anadromous Fish Restoration Actions in the Butte Creek Watershed**

*Lead Federal Agency:*  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
2800 Cottage Way, W-2605  
Sacramento, California 95825

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) proposes to fund cooperative actions in the Butte Creek watershed to protect, enhance, and restore anadromous fisheries and their habitats, while maintaining an equitable balance among other land and water uses such as agriculture, municipal and industrial needs, power generation, flood control, and recreation. The Proposed Actions evaluated in this Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) include many of those recommended in the Central Valley Project Improvement Act's (CVPIA) Anadromous Fish Restoration Program (AFRP) to augment cumulative efforts to at least double populations of anadromous fish in Central Valley streams.

**Project Description**

The action area includes Butte Creek from the headwaters downstream to the historical confluence with the Sacramento River, and from the mouth of Butte Slough on lower Butte Creek, through the Sutter Bypass, to the confluence with the Feather River. The Proposed Actions would be based upon willing landowner participation and include the following: 1) land conservation, 2) fish passage, 3) fish screens, 4) spawning gravel replenishment, 5) riparian revegetation, 6) channel and instream habitat modification, 7) meander belt and floodplain management, 8) stream bank modification, 9) agricultural management, 10) road management, and 11) monitoring. Mitigation and conservation measures have been incorporated to avoid or minimize adverse effects to the human environment.

**Alternatives**

The PEA addresses two alternatives: the No Action Alternative, in which the Service would not provide AFRP funds for watershed actions, and the Proposed Actions Alternative, in which the Service would fully or partially provide AFRP funds for specified actions. The No Action Alternative was not selected because it could allow deterioration of anadromous fish habitat, further declines in natural spawning activity, and inhibit the recovery of anadromous fish in Butte Creek.

### **Environmental Impacts**

Based upon information contained in the PEA, we have determined that this Federal action would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. A summary of the reasons for a Finding of No Significant Impact is as follows:

1. Federally listed species are not likely to be adversely affected because associated mitigation and conservation measures have been incorporated into the Proposed Actions. Instream construction activities would be timed to avoid or minimize disturbances during spawning, rearing, and migration periods for anadromous salmonids. Beneficial effects from the Proposed Actions may increase the natural production of salmonids in the watershed.
2. Temporary minor impacts to vegetation may occur; however, staging sites and access routes would avoid or minimize negative impacts on native riparian vegetation. Other mitigation measures would ensure that incidental adverse effects to vegetation are minimized and mitigated. Implementation of the Proposed Actions may increase riparian vegetation and provide a net beneficial effect.
3. Short-term minor impacts to fish and wildlife are likely to occur from project implementation. However, procedural guidelines would be followed and construction timed to minimize incidental disturbance to wildlife. Wildlife habitats such as vegetation, cavities, dens, and burrows would be avoided to the greatest extent possible. The revegetated floodplain may increase wildlife habitat diversity.
4. Minor, short-term impacts are expected to occur to water quality, hydrology, and air quality and project sites during construction. However, the Proposed Actions may have beneficial effects on water temperatures, water quality, creek hydrology, and salmonid spawning habitat.
5. The Proposed Actions are not expected to have any significant adverse effects on wetlands and floodplains, pursuant to Executive Orders 11990 and 11988. The Proposed Actions support the preservation and enhancement of the natural and beneficial values of floodplains. No net loss of wetland or aquatic habitat will occur.
6. Construction activities may have temporary adverse effects on recreation in the project area. To minimize exposure to nearby recreationists, all public safety precautions would be implemented, landowners and locals would be informed prior to construction activities, and signs would be posted near access routes. Construction activities would be limited to

weekdays whenever possible, and would be completed as soon as possible to minimize impairment of recreational opportunities during construction.

7. There would be no long-term, adverse impacts to social and economic conditions resulting from the Proposed Actions. Implementation of the Proposed Actions may enhance aesthetic values of the local communities.
8. None of the project features would result in short- or long-term adverse effects to human health or the environment, result in disproportionate adverse effects to low-income or minority populations, or alter social or economic conditions in the region.
9. No adverse effects to cultural resources are expected because site-specific projects would only commence upon compliance with the Cultural Resources Programmatic Agreement between the Service, the California State Historic Preservation Office and the Advisory Council for Historic Preservation. If any cultural resources are discovered during the project, work will halt and the Service's Regional Archaeologist will be contacted.
10. No Indian Trust Assets have been identified within the project area. Local Native Americans have been contacted and given the opportunity to comment on the project.
11. The Proposed Actions would be implemented in a phased approach and based on willing landowner participation. The use of adaptive management would tend to spread implementation of approved actions over time. The temporary and minor adverse effects that may occur at construction sites would not be expected to substantially accumulate throughout the watershed, because only a few of the actions would likely be implemented in any single year and all actions would incorporate mitigation and conservation measures. Cumulative actions to improve stream corridor habitats throughout the watershed may provide benefits to associated vegetation and wildlife, but the benefits would not be substantial relative to the overall restoration efforts needed to improve salmonid habitat within the watershed.
12. Additional activities related to salmonid habitat improvement may be funded through programs other than the AFRP, but the objectives of these programs would likely overlap with the Proposed Actions. The effects of the Proposed Actions in combination with these other potential activities would not be expected to substantially exceed overall cumulative effects identified for the watershed, or that would otherwise occur throughout the Central Valley over the 10-year life of the PEA.

Therefore, it is my determination that the proposal does not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment under the meaning of section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (as amended). As such, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. A PEA has been prepared in support of this

finding, and is available upon request to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office, 2800 Cottage Way, W-2605, Sacramento, CA 95825.

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Manager, California/Nevada Operations Office

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Date

**Proposal Coordination:**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Lead Agency)

Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office, Sacramento, CA

Sacramento-San Joaquin Estuary Fishery Resources Office, Stockton, CA

Sacramento Realty Field Office, Sacramento, CA

Region I Cultural Resources Team, Sherwood, Oregon

Region I Division of Habitat Protection and Management

National Marine Fisheries Service, Santa Rosa, CA

U.S. Forest Service, Lassen National Forest, Susanville, CA

U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Redding Resource Area, Redding, CA

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Mid-Pacific Region, Sacramento, CA

California Department of Fish and Game

Region II, Rancho Cordova, CA

Region II, Chico, CA

Butte Creek Watershed Conservancy, Chico, CA

Butte Creek Watershed Project, Chico, CA

Lower Butte Creek Project, Chico, CA

Ducks Unlimited, Sacramento, CA

Jones and Stokes Associates, Inc., Sacramento, CA

The Nature Conservancy, Sacramento, CA